



Children's Cabinet Policy Briefing: Youth Engagement

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Governor's Office for Children**

Agenda

9:30 am – 11:00 am: Youth Engagement
Presentation

11:00 am – 11:15 am: Break

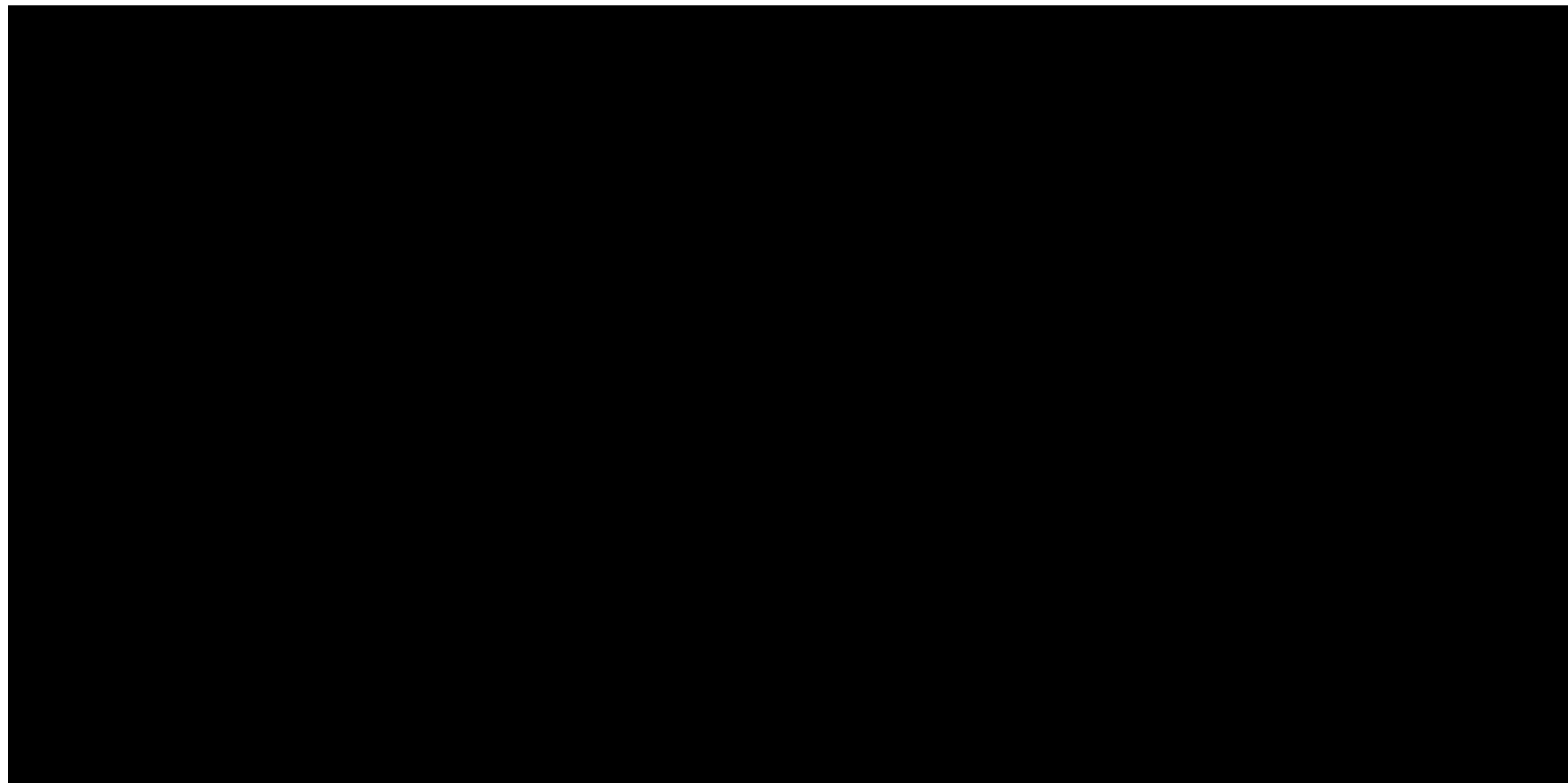
11:15 am – 12:00 pm: Work Session

12:00 pm – 12:20 pm: Report Out

12:20 pm – 12:30 pm: Wrap Up and Next Steps



YOUTH



Objectives

1. Learn the 8 Principles of Youth Engagement.
2. Understand the benefits of adopting youth engagement strategies.
3. Learn how to incorporate youth engagement strategies to address current and future work.



What is Youth Engagement?

Youth Engagement is a powerful way for organizations to include the young people they serve, in moving their work forward to better serve them.

Youth Engagement is the result when young people are involved in responsible, challenging actions to create positive social change.

Why is it Important?



Healthy Development



Executive Functions

- Advanced reasoning abilities
- Expanded capacity for abstract and critical thinking
- Understanding ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions
- Analysis of complex issues
- Evaluation of alternatives before making decisions.

Expertise



Youth engagement offers the expertise and partnership of young people, helping adults fully understand what it is like to grow up in a rapidly changing world while navigating the various systems and policies impacting the lives of youth each day.

Civic Engagement



Youth who volunteer...

- Are more likely to become adults who vote and engage in service to their community
- Are strengthening relationships and networks that build social capital
- Are significant predictors of a state's economic opportunity and resilience.

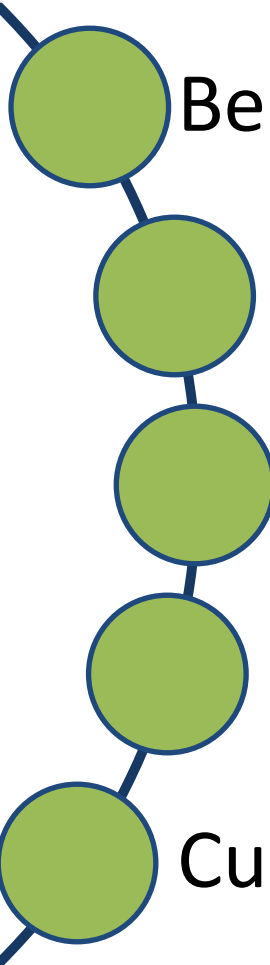
POP QUIZ

Q: In 2014, what percentage of youth ages 16-24 volunteered?

A: 21.9%, the lowest compared to all other age groups.*

*United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. February 2015

What are the Benefits?

- 
- Benefitting the community
 - Benefitting your organization
 - Making tomorrow's leaders
 - Empowerment and building confidence
 - Cultivating important life skills

Principles of Youth Engagement

Three Core Strengths:

Capacity: Knowledge, leadership and action skills.

Motivation: Understanding and awareness of issues and root causes, systems, strategies for change, commitment, and a sense of responsibility.

Opportunity: Chances to act on passions, use skills, and generate change through relevant sustained action.



Principle 1: Design an Outreach Strategy

Effective youth engagement strategies must have strong and continuous outreach strategies.

- Be intentional about recruiting young people that represent a range of perspectives, experiences, and skill-levels.
- Concentrate on places where young people are:
 - Schools, youth-serving organizations, faith-based organizations, community centers, malls, and recreation areas (parks, sports fields, rec centers).
- Long-term recruitment planning – create a “revolving door” of youth leaders.

Principle 2: Create a “Home Base”

Effective youth engagement strategies creates a “home base” for young people.

- “Home base” provides a system of supports to adults and organizational resources.
- “Home base” must be a designated work space with the necessary equipment and supplies to do their job.
- Should be physically accessible and located in or near the neighborhood or community that the youth will work in.

Principle 3: Convey an Intentional Philosophy

Effective youth engagement efforts are driven by an intentional philosophy about change that young people and adults understand and own.

- Be clear why you are engaging youth and articulate clear roles for the youth and adults.
- Have a clear roadmap that includes short and long-term goals, as well as strategies to achieve those goals.
- Help youth understand how they can create a “ripple effect” to expand their impact to their peers, families, neighborhoods, cities, and beyond.

Principle 4: Identify Core Issues

Effective youth engagement strategies take issue identification seriously and define clear focal points for action.

- Give youth authentic decision-making power.
- Connect the youths' lived experiences to the issues and the issues to the broader agenda.
- Conduct research to help youth and adults better understand the root causes of an issue and develop effective responses.

Principle 5: Create Youth and Adult Teams/Partnerships

Effective youth engagement strategies have at their core a youth and adult team/partnership.

- Both partners have equal opportunities to utilize skills, make decisions, and independently carry out tasks to reach a shared goal or purpose.
- Both partners' views are equal to the other.
- Both partners are held to the same standard of accountability.
- Youth must be compensated for their work.

Principle 5: Create Youth and Adult Teams/Partnerships

What young people want from adult partners:

- Someone with whom they can have a professional relationship
- Someone to look up to
- Well-connected to the community
- Similar experiences and understanding what needs to be done
- A high energy level
- Expectations of the best but also reasonable

What adult partners must embrace to work with youth:

- A strong sense of interdependence with a focus on identifying a range of opportunities that young people and adults work together on
- Young people and adult partners listen more than talk
- Adult's ability to acknowledge their own mistakes and recognize that what they believe may not be important to the young person
- Adults seeking young people's opinions
- Adults actively recognizing young people when they have done a good job and giving constructive feedback when they can improve

Principle 5: Create Youth and Adult Teams/Partnerships

Youth-Adult Partnership Preparation Checklist: Public Speaking

The adult partner:

- Informs the young person about the upcoming event, learns about his/her interest, and confirms that timing is right for their participation
- Provides information on the subject matter to the young person
- Briefs the young person on who will be at the event

The young person:

- Develops key messages
- Practices the presentation with the adult partner

Together:

- Adult partner assists the young person in asking any questions
- Young person and adult partner debrief after the event to learn from the experience



Additional Thoughts

- Knowing youth as a whole person, not asking them to check pieces of themselves at the door.
- Avoid asking a youth for participation (or to represent their community) solely because of their identity or experiences.
- Take the time to educate yourself on the needs and experiences of the youth before and while working with them. Learn from their expertise but don't expect them to be your sole source of knowledge on the issues and population.
- Honoring the importance of the work by making every step of the way special.

Principle 6: Build Youth and Adult Capacity

Effective youth engagement strategies are intentional about building youth and adult capacity

- Have a dual focus on building skills and awareness.

Skills (youth)

- Personal skills
- Leadership skills
- Team skills
- Basic administrative skills

Skills (adult staff)

- Facilitation skills
- Critical thinking skills
- Communication skills

Awareness

- How local systems function
- Understand the relationship between problems, systemic contributions, and the root causes
- Understand the local history as it relates to the issue
- A sense of responsibility for the conditions they see around them

Principle 7: Provide Individual Supports

Effective youth engagement strategies balance the need for individual supports with the goal of community change.

- Youth must feel safe and supported.
- Accountability and supports must range from personal health and safety to quality of work and professional development.
- Balancing what is good for the young person and what is good for the community.

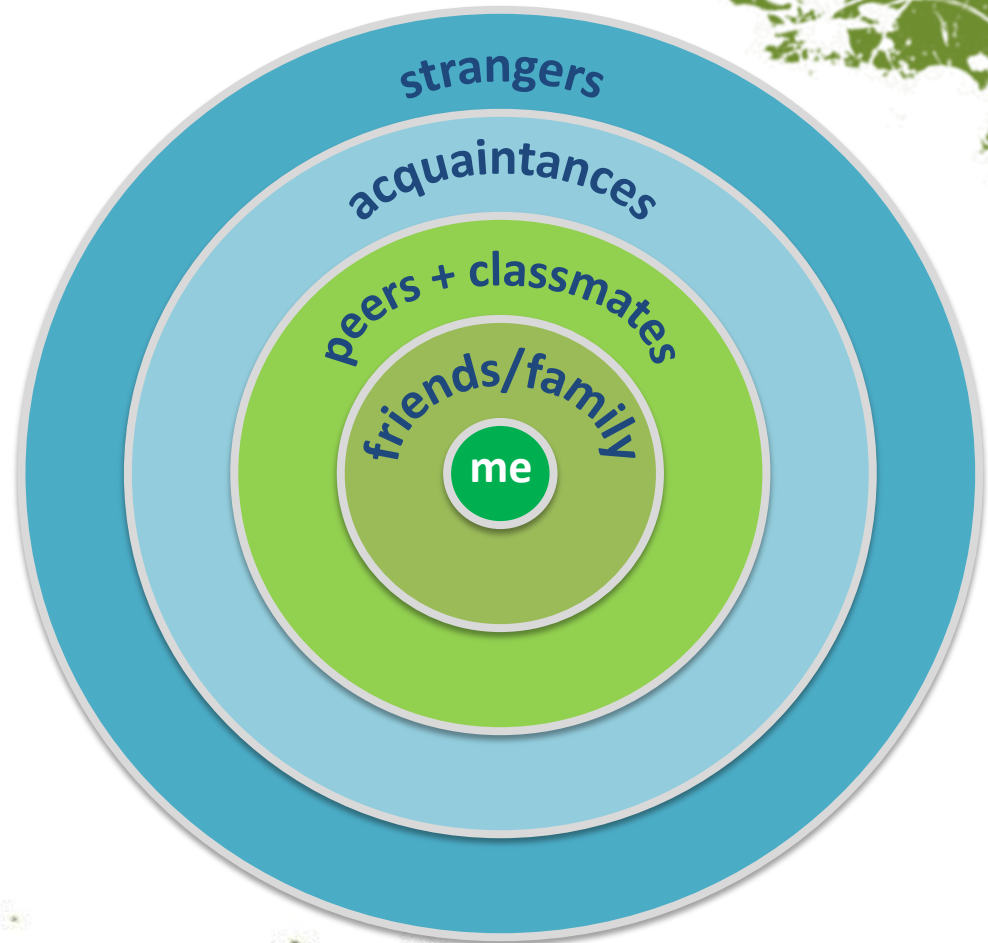
Strategic Sharing



- Strategic sharing means you are clear about what you will say.
- The first goal is protecting yourself, other people who might be involved in your story, your audience, and your personal story.
- It means controlling what parts of your story are shared and what is held back.

Sharing Circles

- The Sharing Circle shows that not all relationships are equal, so not all sharing is equal, either.
- The closer the circle is to you, the more life facts you can feel good about sharing.



Stop Light Strategy



This tool helps you figure out what is okay to say and what is not okay to say in the sharing circles.

Green Light: statements can be made to anyone at any time.

Yellow Light: statements should only be said in certain circumstances and limited to certain peers and classmates.

Red Light: statements should be kept within family and a few good friends.

Principle 8: Sustain Access and Influence

Effective youth engagement strategies create opportunities for sustained access and influence.

- Cultivate an audience, create demand, and connect the work of the youth to other organizations and initiatives.
- Guide the youth to develop a communication place, which will ensure that the youth's voices are heard by the public at large.
- Create clear channels for youth to present their findings and recommendations to key decision-making bodies.

Additional Considerations



Staff Buy-In



Funding



Meeting dates and times



Providing excused school absences and service learning hours

Transportation



Food



Using technology



Adult allies



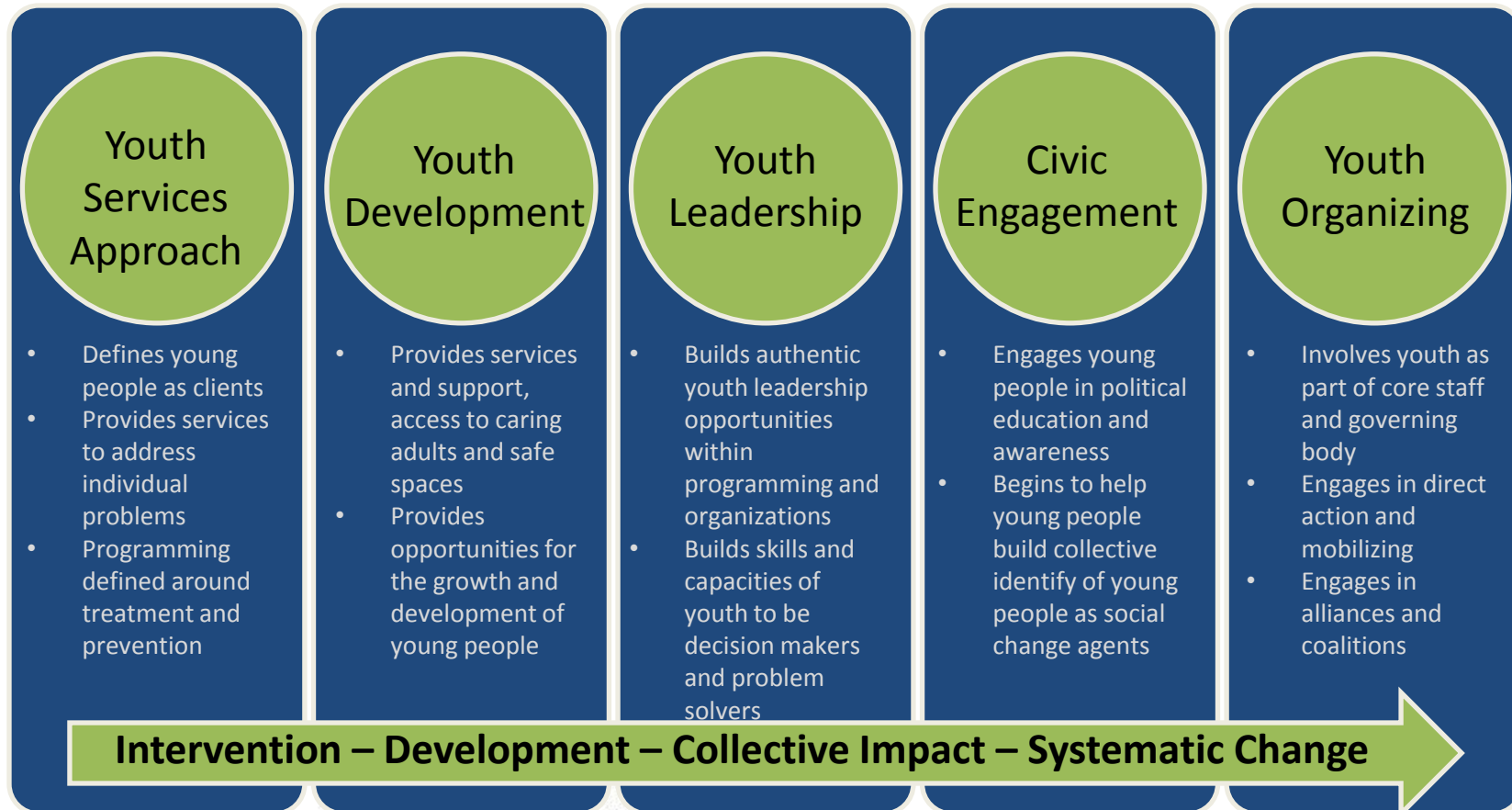
The rule of three



What Does This Look Like in Practice?



The Youth Engagement Continuum



A Look at Maryland

Statewide Opportunities:

- Maryland Youth Advisory Council
- DHR's State Youth Advisory Council
- DJS Advisory Board
- Maryland Association of Student Councils
- Student Member of the Board of Education
- MHEC – Student Advisory Council
- USM Student Council
- Maryland YMCA Youth and Government
- Maryland 4-H State Council
- Taking Flight Youth Council
- Maryland Page Program

Local Opportunities:

- Baltimore City Youth Commission
- Harford County Youth Commission
- Port Towns Youth Council
- Youth M.O.V.E. – Eastern Shore and Montgomery County
- NAACP County Chapter Youth Councils
- Prince George's County Parks and Recreation Youth Council
- Voices For Change
- Greenbelt Youth Advisory Council
- Montgomery County Youth Council
- Teen Advisory Group (county libraries)

The Role of Youth within Organizations

Advisors to the Organization

Will youth serve in an advisory capacity to the organization, making recommendations that inform other's decision?

VS

Decision-Makers

Will youth have the authority to make important procedural decisions on things like budgets and programming?

Targeted Programs

Will youth work to develop, grow, or advise on specific programs?

VS

Comprehensive System-Building

Will youth help to establish systematic improvements for the organization as a whole?

Solving Youth Issues

Will youth focus efforts on directly supporting and addressing the needs of youth?

VS

Developing Youth Assets

Will youth focus on the strengths or assets of youth and seek strategies to develop and capitalize on those assets?

Youth Engagement Approaches

Youth in Research and Evaluation

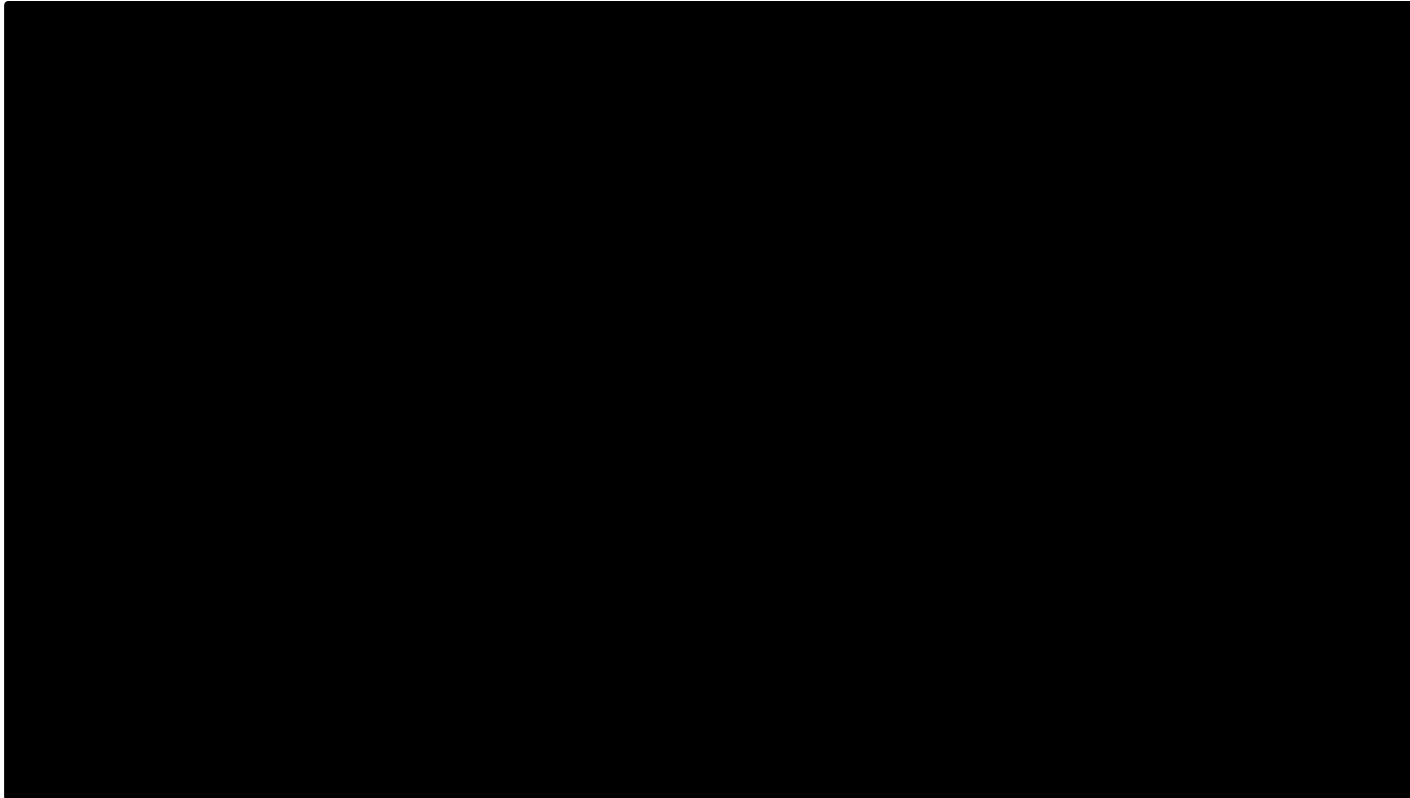
- Youth-led mapping
- Participatory-action research

Youth Engagement Continuum of Decision-Making



Young people are engaged in activities that **INFORM** the planning, design, delivery, implementation, and ongoing evaluation of programs and practices designed by youth.

VOYCE (Voices for Youth in Chicago Education)



Youth Engagement Approaches

Youth in Research and Evaluation

- Youth-led mapping
- Participatory-action research

Youth in Community Organizing/Advocacy

- Social and community activism
- Political and policy lobbying
- Adult and peer education and training
- Radio, web publishing, television, video/music production, and written publications

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Young people are engaged in activities that **INFLUENCE** the development and the implementation policies, programs, and practices that address problems in their community.

Wide Angle Youth Media

<https://vimeo.com/62172914>

Youth Engagement Approaches

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Youth in Decision-Making and Governance

- Youth on non-profit/association boards
- Independent youth boards and youth councils
- Youth-led grant-making programs (independent)
- Youth-run foundation programs
- Youth-led governing boards

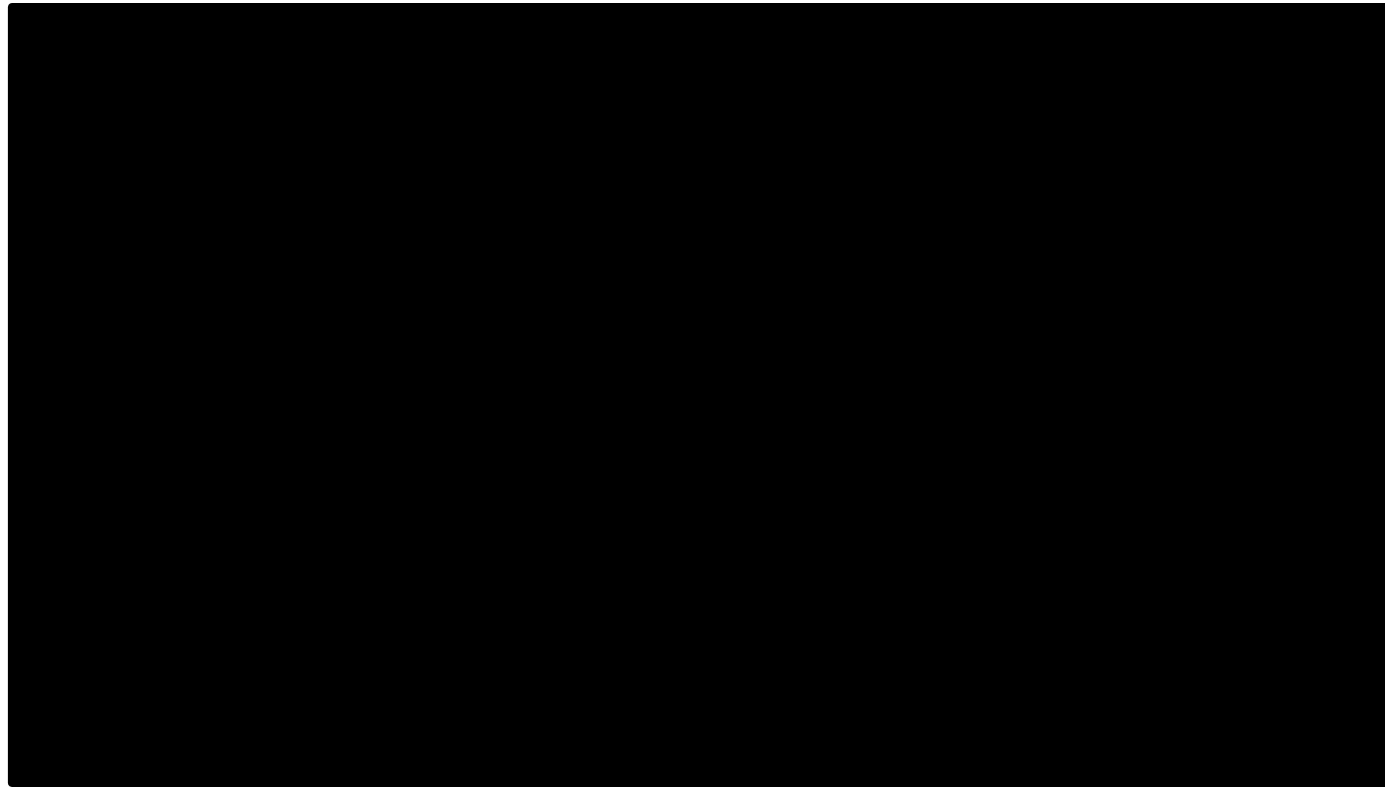
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Young people are engaged in activities that **INFLUENCE** the development and the implementation policies, programs, and practices that address problems in their community.

Young people are **MAKING DECISIONS** about policy issues, programs, and practices that affect their lives, their peers, and their communities.

The Youth Dreamers, Inc.



Authentic Youth Voice

Young People...

- Are equal partners in all aspects of their own individual planning and decision-making;
- Are equal partners in making decisions and determining the direction of programs and activities, agency policy development, service design, training design and delivery;
- Expect to, and receive, consistent opportunities to set goals, devise strategies, and act;
- Are respected for their ideas and opinions and are free to state them;
- Participate in challenging experiences, with the necessary support to help them succeed; and
- Thrive when adults listen to them, respect them, and engage them in meaningful programs and activities.



I think that being a member of the YAC has definitely inspired me to be a leader in my community because I have always been shy and did not recognize that I have a voice in my community. It helped me to be confident in front of a group of people, and to communicate and work with different people to deliver important messages.

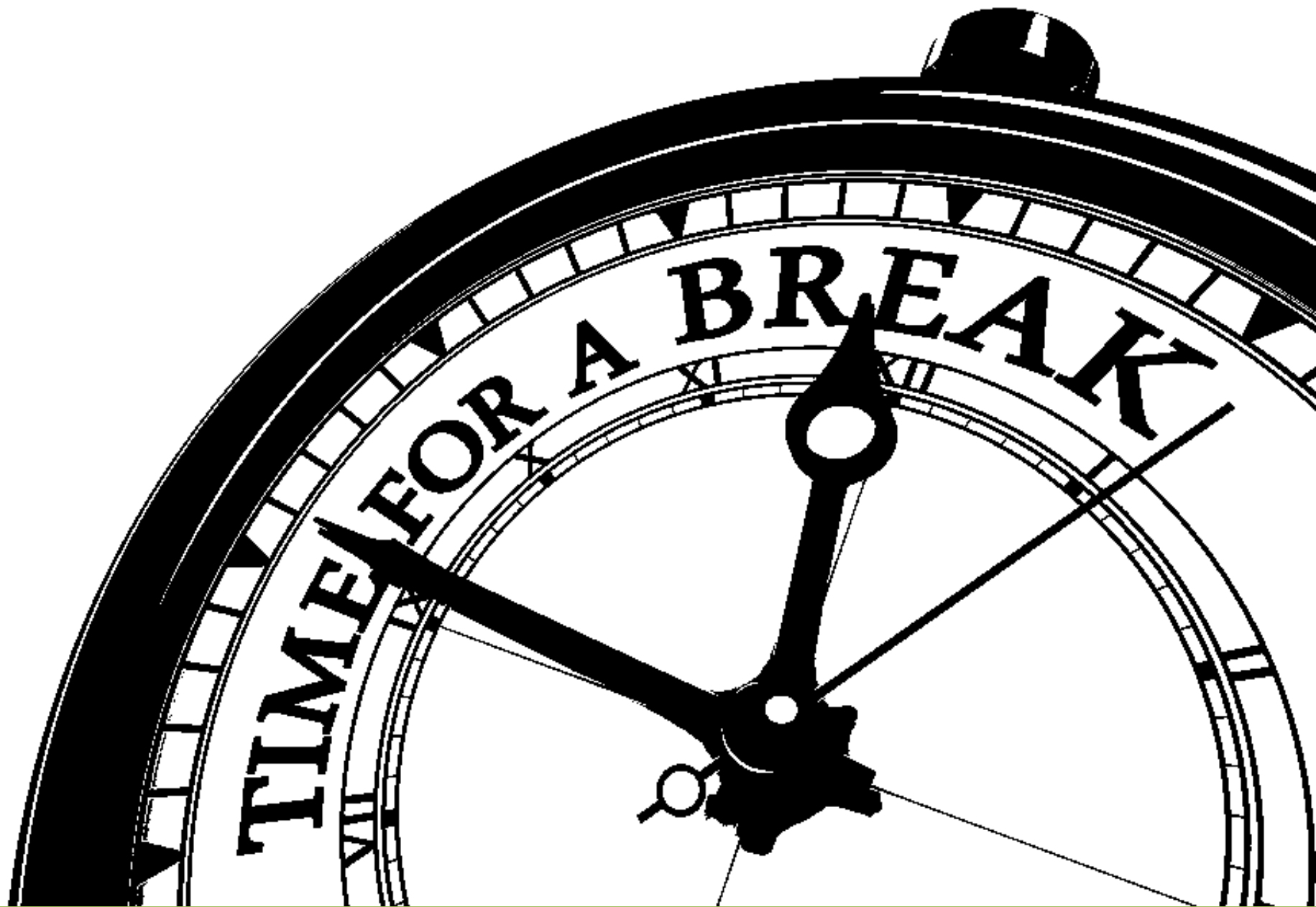
—Liu Zhen Huang, 18

Resources

- ***Authentic Youth Engagement: Youth-Adult Partnerships*** – Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative
- ***Building Effective Youth Councils: A Practical Guide to Engaging Youth In Policy Making*** - The Forum for Youth Investment
- ***Connecting Youth and Strengthening Communities: The Data Behind Civic Engagement and Economic Opportunity*** -Opportunity Nation
- ***Core Principles for Engaging Young People in Community Change*** - The Forum for Youth Investment
- ***Game Changers: Establishing a Youth Advisory Council Toolkit*** - generationOn
- ***Realizing the Power of Youth and Young Adult Voice through Youth Leadership Boards*** – Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative
- ***Understanding the State of Knowledge of Youth Engagement Financing and Stability*** – Aracelis Gray and Cheryl D. Hayes, The Finance Project
- ***Youth Action: Youth Contributing to Communities, Communities Supporting Youth*** – The Forum for Youth Investment
- ***Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL) Curriculum*** - John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities
- ***Youth Leadership Toolkit: Strategic Sharing*** – National Resource Center for Youth Development



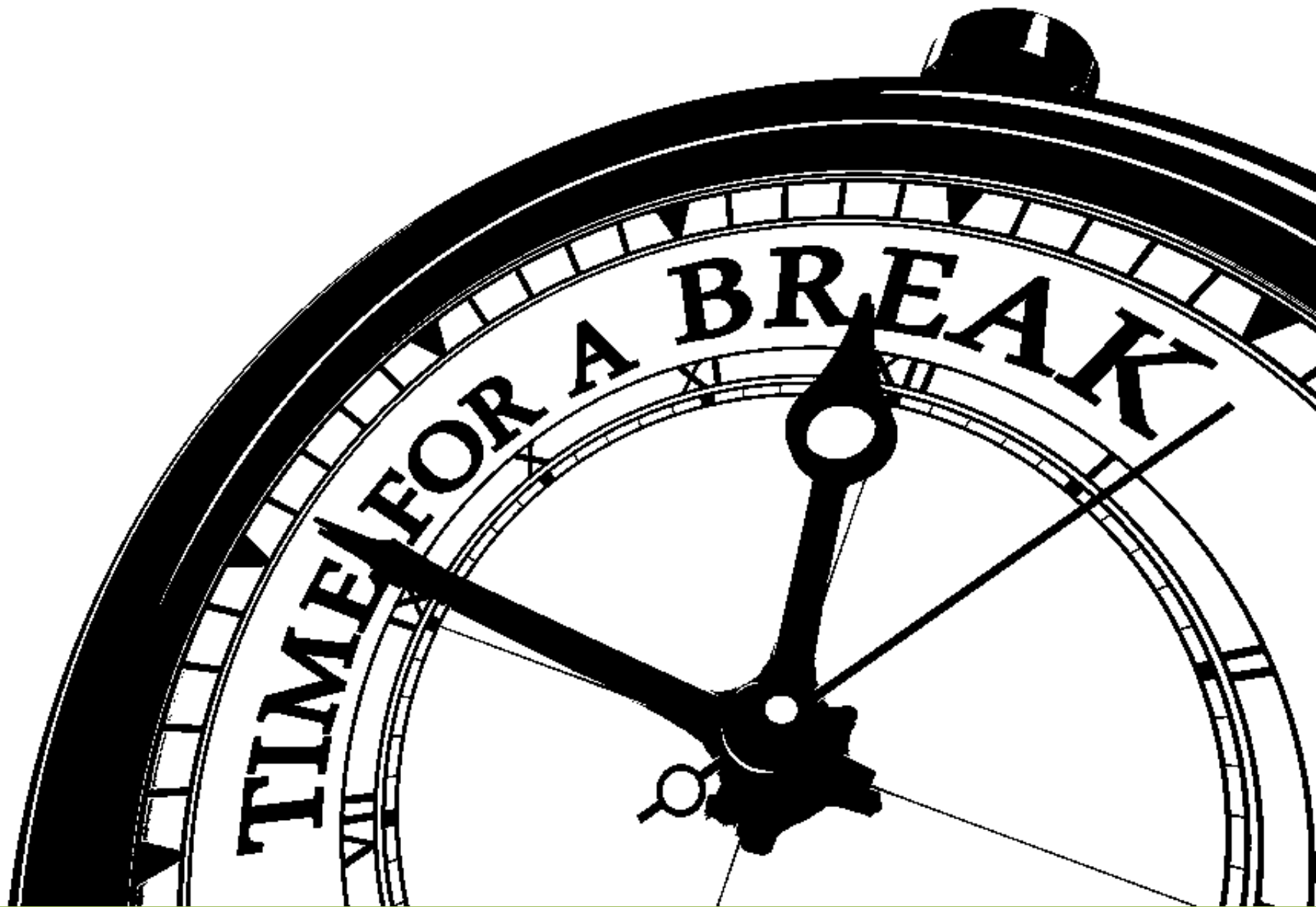
Questions?



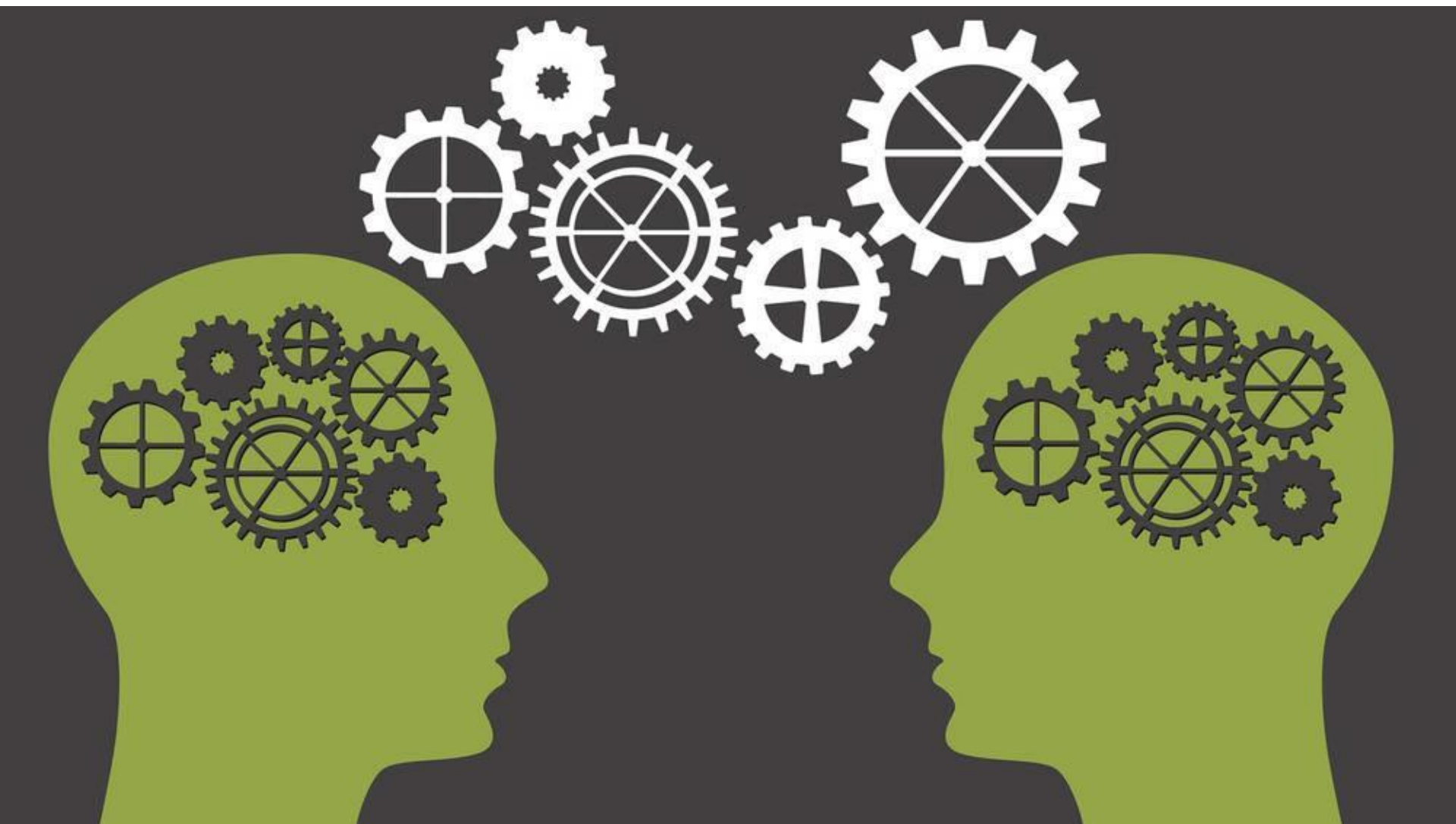
15 Minute Break

1. What youth engagement opportunities currently exist in your organization or county and how can you connect and partner with them?
2. How can the three youth engagement approaches be implemented and/or connected to current and future work?
3. Using the 8 Principles, how can you improve and/or build up the current youth engagement opportunities?

Work Session



15 Minute Break



Share Out



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Thank You For Your Time!